UCIS Expansion

Late in 2001, the Court Technology Committee approved the addition of 10 counties to UCIS. These counties were to be added by September 2002. The last of the 10 counties was added in May.

Each of the 10 counties has received initial training, and most have received supplemental training. Follow-up training will be ongoing, as needed. The training was conducted by Aglae Young of the State Court Administrators Office, with the cooperation and assistance of a local area representative for each respective county. This local representative will also serve as a "mentor clerk", in most counties.

The addition of Cass County in November will mark the 40th county using UCIS. The remaining 13 counties account for approximately 2.5% – 2.6% of the total statewide filings.

Regarding the expansion of UCIS beyond the 40 counties to include the 13 remaining counties, several factors should be included in the decision. The first factor is the telecommunications cost. While this has been a significant issue in the past, recent billing changes achieved through cooperation with ITD enable us to pay a "flat rate" for the courts in all the counties within in the state. This serves the purpose of removing the telecommunications cost barrier of entry for UCIS.

The second and much less quantifiable is the cost of support. Historically, personnel who use an information system the least need proportionally more support than those who use the system the most. It has been suggested that the lack of regular use creates a less thorough understanding of the information system which is then manifested through more substantial numbers of help requests. These help requests will impact both the state court help desk as well as the 'mentor clerk' that is identified.

In addition to UCIS support, there is also network support, operating system support, desktop support that will be acquired by implication, if UCIS is added to a county.

It is very important that the number of calls received to the help desk by adding counties be closely monitored to avoid getting into the position of having more calls for support than can be responded to in a timely manner. In short, we need to ensure we do not commit support beyond our means to provide support.

The third factor, closely related to the cost of support, is efficiency. A clerk using an information system to aid in processing thousands of cases per month will, over time, become more efficient in the use of the information system than one who uses it to process far fewer cases. Or, at the very least, the clerk processing very few cases will take a much longer period of time to achieve the same level of efficiency. For example, if a specific type of case is received so infrequently that several months elapse between the processing of that case type, the clerk may need "retraining" each time that case type is processed. It is impossible to accurately quantify the effect this factor may have on adding new counties.

The fourth factor is the cost of equipment: acquisition cost, support cost and maintenance costs. While each clerk of court has a computer, the computer may be several years old and in need of replacement. We have also seen several requests from clerks in smaller offices asking for a second computer for the part time personnel working with the clerk, even though the 'authorized' (by WAPC) clerks is 1 or a fraction of 1. Over time, this could have the effect of doubling the hardware cost for counties having one or a fraction of one FTE in the clerk's office. In most of these offices, we have been placing citrix computers. Each citrix computer costs approximately $750.00, plus operating system licenses.

Another piece of equipment to be included in the cost factor is a printer. While each county has a printer, it is typically older and worthy of being replaced. Each printer and appropriate network connection device costs approximately $500.00

In summary:
- The addition of Cass County to UCIS will mean that UCIS counties account for 97% to 98% of the total filings statewide.
- Telecommunications costs are a "non-issue" as we now pay a flat rate for the entire state.
- The quantifiable hardware costs per county, assuming one computer and one printer is approximately $1250.00.
- The number of calls to the help desk for support, per county added is minimal, on average, fewer than 5 per month for smaller counties.

Given the above, my recommendation is that the remaining 13 counties should be added to UCIS. The addition should occur gradually over the next 18 months and the support required should be reviewed as each county is added to ensure we do not commit support beyond our current means.